# SAUDI DEFENCE SPENDING

## A Case of Misuse of Muslim Wealth

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*In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful*

## Introduction

It would surprise and shock most Muslim peoples were they to be told that the Saudi Armed Forces are not only the costliest in the world but also have negligible defence capability. This, however, is a reality which no one can refute. Why then, it may be asked, the Saudi regime has been and continues to spend vast and ever-increasing sums of money on 'defence'? Before answering this intriguing question, let us first examine some facts and figures about the Saudi defence spending and its armed forces.

A widely acknowledged source of reliable information about world's defence forces is *Military Balance* published yearly by the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies. According to this publication, in the fiscal 1981-82 the Saudi defence expenditure was 24.4 billion U.S. dollars and the total strength of its armed forces stood at 52,200. Of this total, the army accounted for 35,000, the air force 15,000, and the navy 2,200. To understand and appreciate the significance of these figures some analysis and comparisons are necessary.

## Per Capita Defence Expenditure

Per capita defence expenditure is the money spent on defence for each person in the country's population and is obtained by dividing the annual defence expenditure by the country's total population.

An analysis of the data contained in the latest edition of *Military Balance* (Oct, 1982) shows that, incredible though it might seem, the per capita defence expenditure of Saudi Arabia in Year 1981 was not only by far the highest in the world but exceeded also the *combined* per capita defence expenditures of the United States, Great Britain, France, West Germany, Pakistan, Malaysia, Jordan, Spain, Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Indonesia, Sudan and Nigeria, as shown in the table below.

| S.No. | Country | Per Capita defence Expenditure – 1981 (U.S. $) |
|---|---|---|
| | **Saudi Arabia** | **3,014** |
| 1 | United States | 782 |
| 2 | Great Britain | 433 |
| 3 | France | 437 |
| 4 | Germany | 471 |
| 5 | Pakistan | 212 |
| 6 | Malaysia | 140 |
| 7 | Jordan | 134 |
| 8 | Spain | 96 |
| 9 | Turkey | 56 |
| 10 | Morocco | 52 |
| 11 | Egypt | 49 |
| 12 | Algeria | 41 |
| 13 | Indonesia | 17 |
| 14 | Sudan | 17 |
| 15 | Nigeria | 11 |

Total of countries 1 to 15 = $2,948, Saudi Arabia alone = $3,014

**Defence Expenditure Per Soldier**

Another index we can use for comparison with other armed forces, including those of nuclear powers with global commitments, is the defence expenditure per person in the armed forces. This is obtained by dividing the annual defence expenditure by the total personnel in the armed forces. Here, the comparison is even more startling as the figure for Saudi Arabia is more than four times that of the United States and 44 per cent greater than the total of 18 countries listed in the following table.

| S.No. | Country | Defence Expenditure (billion $) | Total Armed Forces | Defence Expenditure per person in Armed Forces ($) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Saudi Arabia** | **24.4** | **52,200** | **470,000** |
| 1 | United States | 215.9 | 2,116,800 | 102,008 |
| 2 | Great Britain | 14.09 | 327,600 | 43,088 |
| 3 | France | 19.295 | 492,850 | 39,090 |
| 4 | West Germany | 18.440 | 495,000 | 37,050 |
| 5 | Italy | 7.711 | 370,000 | 20,840 |
| 6 | Spain | 3.650 | 347,000 | 10,526 |
| 7 | Greece | 1.887 | 206,500 | 9,120 |
| 8 | Turkey | 6.240 | 569,000 | 10,960 |
| 9 | Algeria | 0.857 | 168,000 | 5,101 |
| 10 | Egypt | 2.10 | 452,000 | 4,646 |
| 11 | Jordan | 0.425 | 72,800 | 5,900 |
| 12 | Libya | 0.502 | 65,000 | 7,770 |
| 13 | Morocco | 1.11 | 141,000 | 12,900 |
| 14 | Sudan | 0.333 | 58,000 | 5,740 |
| 15 | Indonesia | 2.69 | 269,000 | 6,000 |
| 16 | Pakistan | 1.89 | 478,000 | 4,000 |
| 17 | India | 5.26 | 1,104,000 | 4,800 |
| 18 | South Korea | 3.97 | 601,600 | 6,667 |

Total of countries 1 to 18 = $332,967
Saudi Arabia alone = $470,000

Finally, we present another table showing the current defence expenditures, strength of armed forces, and holdings of two major items of equipment – the combat aircraft and tanks – in Saudi Arabia and 11 other Muslim countries, to drive home the point about the scandalous Saudi defence spending – scandalous because inspite of astronomical Saudi defence spending over the years its defence capability remains pathetically insignificant. The data is shown in the table below.

| S.No. | Country | Defence Expenditure (billion $) | Strength of Armed Forces | Combat Aircraft | Tanks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Saudi Arabia** | **24.400** | **52,200** | **128** | **450** |
| 1 | Turkey | 6.240 | 569,000 | 402 | 3,650 |
| 2 | Algeria | 0.857 | 168,000 | 306 | 680 |
| 3 | Egypt | 2.100 | 452,000 | 429 | 2,100 |
| 4 | Jordan | 0.425 | 72,800 | 94 | 540 |
| 5 | Morocco | 1.110 | 141,000 | 97 | 195 |
| 6 | Sudan | 0.333 | 58,000 | 30 | 272 |
| 7 | Pakistan | 1.89 | 478,000 | 219 | 1,250 |
| 8 | Libya | 0.502 | 65,000 | 555 | 2,900 |
| 9 | Indonesia | 2.690 | 269,000 | 45 | 106 |
| 10 | North Yemen | 0.331 | 32,050 | 75 | 714 |
| 11 | South Yemen | 0.124 | 26,000 | 114 | 470 |
| Total of countries 1 to 11 | | 16.602 | 2,330,850 | 2,366 | 12,877 |

From the totals shown in the above table it can be seen that for two-thirds of Saudi defence spending, the 11 Muslim countries together are maintaining defence forces numbering 2,330,850 against 52,200 of Saudi Arabia, operate 2,366 combat aircraft against 128 of Saudi Arabia, and hold 12,877 tanks against 450 of Saudi Arabia.



**Where do the Billions Go?**

The picture that emerges from the analysis of the above statistics is highly disturbing. Inspite of its gigantic defence spending over the years, amounting to hundreds of billion dollars, the defence capability of the Saudi Armed Forces remains insignificant. The count of its troops and the inventory of its military hardware bear absolutely no relationship to its massive defence spending. So, where do all those billions go? The answer is quite simple. First, a sizeable portion of Saudi defence spending is absorbed by the payroll and fantastic perquisites of its poorly trained and inept defence personnel who are the highest paid and most pampered in the world. Second, a significant part goes to pay for the questionable services of tens of thousands of American military and civilian personnel employed for advisory, planning, training and mainenance duties. Third, a substantial part is spent on the construction of huge military cities, air bases and facilities etc., contracted out mostly to American firms at exorbitant rates to enable them to pay back huge sums in bribes to Saudi officials, particularly at top levels. Moreover, tens of billions are planned to be spent in the coming years on recent purchases of over-sophisticated weapons systems like the Airborne Warning And Control Systems (AWACS), enhanced capability F-15 aircraft and flight refuelling tanker aircraft etc. which, like the military cities, air bases and other facilities, are meant for use not by the Saudi armed forces but by the so-called Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force in pursuance of U.S. objectives and policies.

In the following paragraphs we throw some light on the real state of affairs concerning the Saudi Armed Forces so that the Muslim peoples, particularly the Saudi public, know the true facts. This is necessary in order to demolish the myth that has been created deliberately by the Saudi regime and the U.S. administration about the impending emergence of Saudi Arabia as a strong military power. The truth is that notwithstanding the massive defence spending, militarily Saudi Arabia is alarmingly weak and vulnerable to Israeli aggression. It is incapable of protecting the Muslim Ummah's holiest

places in Mecca and Medina. ***Muslims must also realize that the Saudi regime's policies and defence spending are strengthening not the Saudi defence capability but the United State's military and political position to the serious detriment of the Muslim states in the region.***

**A Watch with Golden Casing But No Inner Mechanism**

To justify its massive and ever-increasing defence spending (1982–83 defence budget is over 29 billion dollars) over the last several years, the Saudi regime would have the world believe that it is poised to become the dominant military power in the region. This is a blatant lie. The truth is that over the last seven years there has been little increase in Saudi military power inspite of well over one hundred billion dollars spent on defence. Let us look at the facts. In 1975, the year Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz took over as Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister, the total strength of Saudi Army, Navy and Air Force was 47,000. Seven years later, in 1982, it has risen to 52,200 only – a marginal increase averaging 740 per year! At this growth rate it would take Saudi Arabia 65 years to increase the strength of its defence forces to 100,000! It is important for the Saudi public and the World Muslim Community to know that all the big talk they hear about the dizzying speed of Saudi military build-up is nothing but false propaganda and deception. In reality the defence capability of Saudi Arabia has seen little increase over the last several years and the wealth of the Ummah has been and continues to be grossly wasted and misused on the pretext of building Saudi Arabia into a strong military power, able to defend its political independence and territorial integrity. In this connection, the present status of Saudi defence forces was aptly described by David Wood in a report published February 11, 1982 in the *International Herald Tribune*. He wrote:

> "Saudi Arabia's military is, in large part, like a watch with a golden casing but no mechanism to make it run. Despite the lavish facilities, the nation lacks the pilots, mechanics, technicians and administrators to make the military machine tick".



The tragedy is that instead of concentrating on the recruitment to its armed forces and on their military training, the regime has been and continues to devote its energies and wealth to buying the loyalty of its armed forces by exorbitant salaries and unbelievable life of luxury – a life-style guaranteed to make them totally unfit to fight under harsh battlefield conditions. To cite an example, a Captain's salary in the Saudi Army is 60,000 U.S. dollars, which is three times that of his counterpart in the U.S. Army. Moreover, not only is the Saudi Captain's salary tax-free but also the perquisites that go with it are not enjoyed by even senior generals in America and other advanced countries of Europe. Of these, David Wood has this to say:

> "Base housing for an average Saudi Air Force officer would make almost any American soldier's eyes blink in disbelief.
>
> The officer – typically a Bedouin only a few years away from his desert upbringing – needs only a key to move into the neat one storey stucco home. Everything he could want, is inside, including stereo, carpets, Wedgewood China, Waterford crystal and 24 piece silver place settings. That is only one example of the care lavished by the Saudi Government on its fledgling air force.
>
> Yet many of those houses, which are sprouting up by the hundreds at Saudi Arabia's four major airbases, are empty. On Monday night at the gigantic new sports complex at Dhahran Air Force Base, only a dozen officers were around to use the olympic-size swimming pool, squash courts, bowling alleys, saunas and snack bars".

It is also pertinent to point out that the scramble for the oil wealth has infected many young men in the Saudi society. Not content with the terms offered by the armed forces – though the most lucrative in the world – they are extremely reluctant to enlist in the defence forces; they see the prospects to make millions more promising outside. Moreover, the predominant concern of those already in, particularly in the higher ranks, is not the professional competency and defence of their country but amassing millions and putting them away in numbered accounts abroad. This has given rise to rampant corrup-

tion, indiscipline, inefficiency and dissatisfaction in the armed forces and reduced their defence capabilitiy to almost nothing. Commenting on the subject, the *Financial Times* of May 5, 1982 wrote:

> "The most serious problem, however, is one of manpower. This is evident not only in the army, the 1000-man navy and the ground services for the airforce, but also a lack of motivation. Because of the pressures of booming private sector, and the fierce struggle for patronage by the princes, Saudi officers of the highest rank have treated the armed forces as a source of commercial profit. This has a telling effect on the morale in the lower ranks".

Another serious weakness of the armed forces is the existence of inter-services rivalries and distrust. This is highlighted by the fact that each of the three services has its own completely independent communication system. This strange arrangement is bound to further degrade the effectiveness of the already weak Saudi Armed Forces. While the emphasis in modern defence forces is on integration and combined operations, the Saudi Armed Forces have been structured on the principle of isolation. ***The only conclusion one can draw from this is that both the Saudi regime and the American advisers are not really serious or sincere in building the Saudi military into an effective fighting force.***

**The American Connection**

As of now, there are reported to be well over 30,000 U.S. military and defence industry personnel in Saudi Arabia. With the arrival of 62 F-15 aircraft, five AWACS, six KC135 flight refuelling tanker aircraft, complex ground facilities for the AWACS, Naval ships, Sidewinder air-to-air missiles and a huge assortment of other defence equipment bought by Saudi Arabia, the figure could reach 100,000 or more.

The influx of U.S. military and defence industry personnel in Saudi Arabia is no mere coincidence; it is the result of well thought out U.S. government plans. The objective is not only to ensure continued



supply of Saudi oil at prices determined by Washington but also to control Saudi policies and actions and, more importantly, to prepare the ground for the build-up of U.S. strategic power and strengthen its hegemony in the region. During the tenure of office of Crown Prince Fahd, who was the de facto ruler of the Kingdom due to ill health of late King Khalid, the Americans received full support and cooperation of the regime. Now that Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz is de jure ruler of the Kingdom, things are going to get even better for the United States. In its July 2, 1982 issue *The Times* described King Fahd thus:

> "***There can hardly be an Arab alive today more firmly convinced of a fundamental identity of interests between the Arabs and the West than King Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz***".

However, despite what King Fahd may believe, the fact remains that time and time again successive U.S. Administrations have publicly declared that Israel is their best ally in the Middle East and have consistently supported the Zionist State militarily, economically and politically against the Arab interests. Furthermore, it is the United States which has built the powerful Israeli war machine which it continues to use to invade and occupy Muslim lands, to massacre Muslims on a massive scale, to drive them out from their lands to settle Zionists from the four corners of the world. America has also repeatedly declared that it is irrevocably committed to maintain Israel's military superiority over the combined military power of the Muslim states in the region, thus placing their security and independence at the mercy of Israel. For example, in a statement made on 25th August, 1981, James L. Buckley, U.S. Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance said:

> "Let me reaffirm that this administration remains committed to the security of Israel and will ensure that Israel maintains its substantial military advantage over potential adversaries. ***The President is irrevocably committed to protecting Israeli's ability to defeat any combination of potentially hostile forces in the region.***"

In the light of the above-mentioned U.S. commitment to Israel, the past aggressions of Israel against the Arabs, particularly its recent invasion of Lebanon, its plans for further expansion of its borders, and the establishment of its hegemony over the Arab world, ***it is difficult to understand how can any Arab, least of all King Fahd, believe in the fundamental identity of interests between the Arabs and the United States.*** Is keeping Saudi Arabia weak and insecure, dictating its internal and external policies, and robbing it of its oil wealth in Saudi Arabia's interests?

**Gigantic Military Construction Projects**

For the past several years the Saudi government has been engaged in a mammoth programme of mind-blowing military construction projects. These include six military cities, naval dockyards and support facilities, bulk fuel dumps, warehouses, command and control centres and training academics etc. Each of the six military cities is so huge that it can cater to the needs of the entire Saudi army and airforce for decades to come.

Before going into the reasons behind these most extravagant projects, let us first give some idea of their magnitude and costs. To be brief, we shall take the military cities only. However, what is said about the size and costs of these applies, by and large, to other projects also. The six military cities are:

* King Khalid Military City (KKMC) near the Iraqi border. Estimated to cost $10 billion, it is designed to house some 60,000 troops, 150 combat aircraft and support personnel.
* Military city south of Riyadh. Estimated to cost $10 billion, it would have the capacity for 100,000 troops. For reasons not yet clear, work on this city has been suspended.
* Military city at Hafr Al-Batin. This is estimated to cost about $7 billion.



* Military city at Khamis Mushayt.
* Military city near Dhahran in the eastern province.
* Military city at Tabuk in the northwest, facing Israel. Incidentally, America has told the Saudi Government that its F-5 and F-15 combat aircraft would not be allowed to be deployed at this base. This was done in compliance with the Israeli demand.

The construction costs of the military cities at Khamis Mushayt, Dhahran and Tabuk are also in the multi-billion dollars category. Being far too big for the small Saudi Army (35,000 men) the above mentioned huge military cities and facilities would be maintained in readiness by the expatriate U.S. military and defence industry personnel for use by the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), whenever needed. For several years the U.S. military strategists have strongly felt the need for some U.S. military presence and appropriate facilities in the region for its RDJTF. ***Saudi Arabia is the only country in the area able and willing to provide, free of cost, all that America deems necessary to implement its strategy in the region.*** With surfiet of petro-dollars, aware of ineffectiveness of its armed forces and afraid of the simmering rebellious tendencies in parts of Saudi society, the Saudi regime readily fell in line with the U.S. plans in the hope that in return America would defend its interests and keep it in power.

It is significant to note that the design and construction of all these extensive military facilities is being overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This lends further support to the conclusion that they are meant for the RDJTF and not for the Saudi Military. Furthermore, for years U.S. politicians, government officials and military leaders have been stressing the crucial importance to the U.S. Southwest Asia Strategy of having some military presence and adequate facilities, suitably equipped and supplied, in the region. Press files are full of statements on this theme by Ronald Reagan, Alexander Haig, Casper Weinberger, Richard Burton, General David C. Jones and many others. There can, therefore, be no doubt that the Saudi regime

is financing the giant construction programme in pursuance of the U.S. strategic plans and not for the expansion of its own defence forces.

An interesting aspect of these projects is that the bigger they are, the happier are the Saudi authorities since the size of the kickbacks depends on the cost of the projects.

**Reckless Shopping**

Even though heavily dependent on foreign personnel, mostly American, for the maintenance and operation of its present equipment holdings, the Saudi government continues to purchase the most sophisticated military hardware worth tens of billions. According to the Swedish International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Saudi Arabia is the Third World's biggest buyer of U.S. military equipment. This was also confirmed by the *New York Times* which stated that according to the U.S. General Accounts Office (GAO) study, as of September, 1981 Saudis had $22.2 billion in orders pending for arms and equipment. This figure, of course, does not include the $8.5 billion AWACS and F-15 aircraft enhancement package and many subsequent orders placed with the U.S. and other countries. In this connection, it must be pointed out that in selling AWACS, advanced missiles and other high technology equipment to Saudi Arabia – far beyond its capacity to absorb – the U.S. administration went so far as to turn a blind eye on the Presidential Arms Transfer Directive of July 8, 1981. According to this Directive, one of the factors governing arms transfers is "whether the proposed equipment transfer can be absorbed by the recipient country without overburdening its military support system". In the case of Saudi Arabia, the question was not of overburdening its military support system, but of almost total absence of it. This was acknowledged by Richard Allen, the U.S. Assistant Secretary for National Security Affairs. In a statement on September 21, 1981, he said: ***"The AWACS is so complex that U.S. personnel will be required in-country to maintain key elements of the system for its entire life. The withdrawal of U.S. support for the AWACS would quickly result in the system ceasing to operate".***



Several other experts have also commented on the total inability of the Saudis to operate and maintain the vast quantities of sophisticated equipment which Saudi Arabia has ordered in recent years or is trying to buy – such as 300 of the latest Leopard II battle tanks from West Germany. Commenting on the furore caused by the Zionist propaganda machine on the sale of F-15 aircraft to Saudi Arabia, a U.S. specialist is reported to have said: "It takes a generation to breed in advanced technology. Giving F-15 to Saudi Arabia is like asking a fisherman from Papua Guinea to pilot Concords". Similarly, writing in April 15, 1981 issue of *International Herald Tribune*, Michael Gerler said: "The sale of AWACS and F-15 package would mean a continuing U.S. Military presence in Saudi Arabia". After a visit to Saudi Arabia, James Buchan wrote in April 23, 1981 *Financial Times* "that the Saudi dependence on foreign personnel, British and U.S., is almost total". And finally, in a report published in February, 1980, *International Herald Tribune*, John Rossant wrote: "The largest and most important military presence, however, is American. This is likely to continue and be upgraded. Inspite of certain French activity in mechanization and radar programmes for Saudi land forces, American technicians form the backbone of the Saudi armed forces".

Thus, the multi-billion dollar Saudi purchases of sophisticated weapons systems not only provide the regime with an excuse to induct large numbers of U.S. military and defence industry personnel as operators, planners, technical advisers, maintenance experts and training instructors etc. but the equipment itself is intended to be integrated into the overall U.S. force structure and used by the U.S. government in pursuance of its own policies and objectives. Finally, these costly military purchases are a source of huge financial gains to the authorities involved, their relatives and friends. The corruption and bribery is so deep and widespread that in this brief report we can not deal with it adequately and need much space to do it justice. ***However, having a lot of data in this regard in our hands, we hope to make it public in a separate paper in due course.***

## Rampant Corruption

Earlier, we had quoted an excerpt from a report in *Financial Times* of May 5, 1982 which pointed out that Saudi officers of the highest rank treat the armed forces as a source of commercial profit. It is to be noted, however, that, barring a few exceptions, the institution of kickbacks or commissions is prevalent not only in the top officers in the armed forces but includes ministers, top civil servants, their relatives and friends also. In fact, the major reason why government contracts and purchases in Saudi Arabia cost so much more than similar deals in honest administrations is that companies and contractors have to pay huge kickbacks to secure orders. Naturally, they not only mark-up the prices by the amounts of kickbacks but several times over. Inevitably, the widespread corruption, has become the grist to the gossip mills in the Kingdoms bazaars and is causing increasing discontentment among the people.

## The Great AWACS Drama

In 1981, the Saudi regime, the Reagan administration, and the Begin government staged a great drama over the sale to Saudi Arabia of what came to be known as the AWACS package, comprising:

* Five E3A "Sentry" AWACS;
* Six KC135 flight refuelling tanker aircraft;
* Seven ground radar stations for communication with the AWACS;
* 101 sets of conformal fuel tanks for the 62 F-15 "Eagle" aircraft already purchased but not yet delivered, and
* 1,177 AIM-9L air-to-air "Sidewinder" missiles.



Actually, the equipment and weapons included in the AWACS package was badly needed by America to build up its strategic military power in the southwest Asia and the Gulf region. Having found a willing sucker in the Saudi regime, the U.S. administration advised it to put in a request for purchase of the package. The Saudi regime complied faithfully. However, as prearranged between Israel and America, the powerful Zionist propaganda machine burst into action against the Saudi request on the plea that, if agreed, it would tilt the military balance in favour of Saudi Arabia and seriously jeopardize the security of Israel! In America also, once again as pre-planned, there arose two groups, one in favour and the other against the sale. The third actor in the drama, the Saudi regime, kept stressing in public statements that the approval of the sale was a test of America's sincerity in its relations with Saudi Arabia. The fake controversy raged for months before the U.S. congress approved the sale, as it was bound to do. In an interview to *Wall Street Journal* on July 5, 1981, the former U.S. Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, said that if the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia did not go through, it would have "serious impact with respect to the U.S. objectives in the region".

The AWACS affair was a well-planned conspiracy and merits a detailed analysis to understand it and its implications. Here, in this brief survey we can do no more than to point out that the only gainers in the deal have been America and Israel. America would get, free of cost, 8.5 billion dollars worth of equipment and weapons included in the AWACS package, and 30 to 40 billion dollars in hangers, workshops, warehouses maintenance shops and equipment, spare parts and tools, office and residential accommodation, and other paraphernalia necessary to deploy the AWACS and F-15 squadrons. The deal would also enable America to station several thousand U.S. personnel in Saudi Arabia to operate and maintain the equipment and weapons. As far as Israel is concerned, it received an immediate grant of 600 million dollars in military aid from the U.S. administration to "offset" the supposed military advantage that AWACS would confer upon Saudi Arabia, even though the delivery of the AWACS would

not start before 1985. Israel also got the U.S. undertaking that the intelligence gathered by the U.S.–controlled AWACS would be available to Israel also. In other words, this formidable multi-function system (AWACS) would be used not only by America but by Israel also; both against the Soviet Union and the Muslim states in the region in pursuance of U.S.–Israeli interests who, after all, are partners in a strategic alliance. In the 'Good Morning America' programme on July 22, 1981, U.S. Defence Secretary stated: "the AWACS is an intelligence gathering plane. It is very necessary for us ... for Israel too, to have as much information as possible about possibly offensive activities by the Soviets or by someone else in the whole region". As for the Saudis, they would be poorer by 40 to 50 billion dollars, and come under greater influence and pressure of America and Israel. In return, America patted the regime for its "wisdom" and honoured it by branding it as a "moderate Arab state"!

**Summary**

For the past several years, the Saudi government has been engaged in a massive programme of building huge military cities, air bases, naval dockyards, fuel dumps, warehouses, command and control headquarters etc. It has also bought and continues to buy large quantities of highly sophisticated weapons systems far beyond its capacity to absorb. However, inspite of having spent hundreds of billions of dollars over the past several years, there has been little increase in the defence capability of Saudi Armed Forces. In 1975, the total manpower strength of Saudi Army, Air Force and Navy stood at 47,000. In 1982, seven years later, and after having spent over 100 billion dollars in the defence sector, the strength of the Saudi Armed Forces increased by 5,200 persons only i.e., from 47,000 in 1975 to 52,200 in 1982.

To maintain and operate its sophisticated military equipment the Saudi government is almost totally dependent, mainly, on U.S.



personnel. At present, there are over 30,000 U.S. military and defence industry personnel maintaining and in several cases, operating, the Saudi weapons systems and military hardware. It is estimated that with the arrival of the recently brought F-15 aircraft, AWACS, KC135 flight refuelling aircraft, air-to-air sidewinder missiles, 19 naval ships from America, and six naval ships and 24 ASW helicopters from France and a great deal of other equipment on order with the United States, the strength of the U.S. personnel in Saudi Arabia will shoot up to 100,000.

The huge military cities, air bases, naval dockyards, warehouses, fuel dumps, command and control headquarters etc. being built by Saudi Arabia with its own money but under the supervision and control of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, are meant to be used by the 200,000–strong RDJTF and not by the Saudi armed forces.

This total dependence has made Saudi Arabia a virtual prisoner of America and deprived the Saudi government of all freedom of action. This was painfully evident during the recent genocide of Arabs in Lebanon. Since the U.S. administration was an active partner with Israel in the invasion, the Saudi regime, like other Arab regimes, could do nothing except watch as spectators the massacre of Muslim and Arab men, women and children in their thousands. The Saudi rulers never seriously threatened to use their oil weapon, their hundreds of billions deposits in America and hundreds of multi-million dollar contracts to American companies, to pressure America to stop the butchery by its Israeli proxy. The pathetic position in which the rulers of Saudi Arabia have landed their country was recently summed up by a European diplomat in these words:

**"From now on, all the Saudi decisions would be made in Washington."**